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PUTNAM'S & THE READER

THE AUGUST NUMBER

Cardinal Gibbons Forty Years Ago
With New Portrait

The Kalsomining of Dakota Sam

Skyland in the Andes

All Cats Look Black at Night
By Anne Warner

Mayor McClellan on Saint-Gaudens

Less than Kin: A Serial
By Alice Duer Miller

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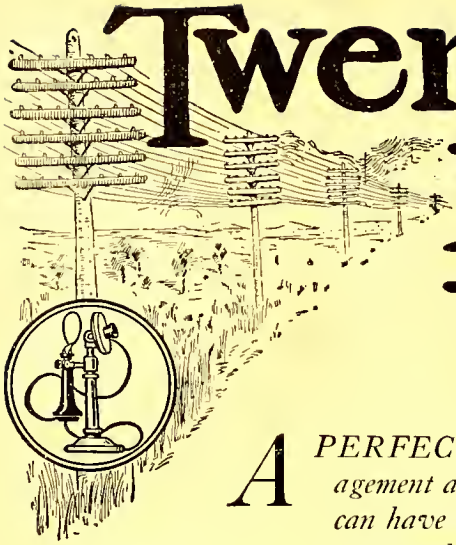

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PUTNAM'S MONTHLY & THE READER

AUGUST, 1908

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From a drawing from the life made for PUTNAM'S AND THE READER by W. D. Paddock, Baltimore, March, 1908

PUTNAM'S MONTHLY
& THE READER

VOL. IV AUGUST, 1908 NO. 5

CARDINAL GIBBONS FORTY YEARS AGO

The Work of a Zealous Young Bishop in North Carolina

By DAY ALLEN WILLEY

Illustrated from Photographs by the Writer

STANDING on the shore of the Potomac is a stately mansion that half a century ago was preserved by the American people as a memorial to the one they call the Father of his Country. The Cape Fear River flows to the sea, through North Carolina, past another building that might also be preserved as a memorial to a noted American, for it is indeed a reminder of the merits of a man who has been honored as the Cardinal Archbishop of the United States.

In the city of Wilmington—that quaint "Salem of the South," peopled far before Revolutionary times—were spent years that were destined to be momentous in the career of James, Cardinal Gibbons. The period when he called it home formed a chapter in his life-history fraught with events which fall within the experience of few. Even a short time makes great changes in our country. He gave up his home in Wilmington not forty years ago, yet his words and deeds while Bishop of North Carolina are known to few outside of the little old city, and those who lived in this part of the South during the stirring times immediately after the Civil War are mostly remembered by their headstones. About these years of his life his lips have thus far been sealed. Why? Because the innate modesty of the man prevents him from telling a tale he might tell that would perhaps show the manliness, courage and patriotism of this prelate far

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ST. THOMAS'S CHURCH, WILMINGTON, N. C.
Front and side views of the church where Bishop Gibbons officiated

more clearly than any acts of his public career.

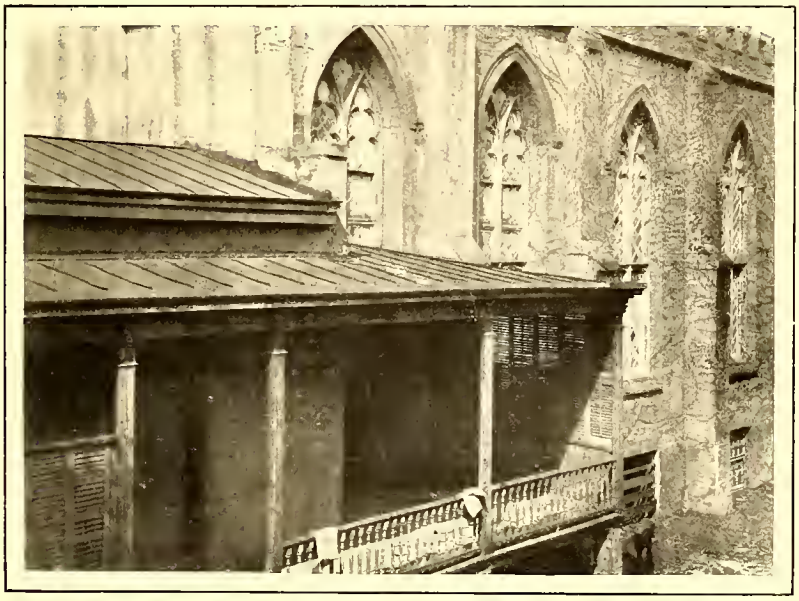
Only by going to Carolina, seeing the evidence of his labor, hearing from the lips of those who know of his devotion and endurance can the curtain be partially rolled away from this part of the panorama of the Cardinal's life; and thus it is revealed to the readers of this magazine. We have to go back a little way to the days just after the war. Carolina had its share of the poverty and suffering. Throughout the State, which stretches from the Atlantic to the Western mountains, five hundred miles away, were only a million people—Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and members of sundry other Protestant denominations; but the Catholic Church was represented by a mere handful of humanity—so few that a Catholic was looked upon as a curiosity; more than this—as one uncanny, to be suspected, shunned. The rites of the Church were regarded as a sort of sorcery. In Wilmington, where the only church of this belief existed between Charleston and far away Petersburg in Virginia, the feeling towards those who worshipped in it was anything but kindly. Little girls whose parents attended it had their aprons torn off in the street and suffered other abuses. Catholic children were forced to leave the one school in the place, because the Protestant fathers and mothers threatened to close its doors if they were not excluded. Perhaps it was well that old St. Thomas's, where were intoned the mass and vespers, was built of brick, with stout plank doors; otherwise it might not now be standing as a silent memorial of those once gathered within it.

As the curtain of history is rolled back, the man whose tragic death in part led to the coming of Bishop Gibbons to Carolina should not be forgotten. The name of Father Murphy is never mentioned here without remembrance of the dreaded plague which for months held the town in its grasp. Among the few who did not flee but remained to nurse the

siek and to administer the last rites to the dying of all beliefs, was the brave Irish priest who at last was strieken down among the victims of yellow fever. With the death of Father Murphy the Catholies of Wilmington were left without a counsellor to guide them. The ehurch was indeed demoralized, and on Archbishop Spalding devolved the task of restoring order out of chaos. The situation needed a man not merely of energy but of executive ability and taet. He must be versatile to meet the emergeneies. There were many willing priests, but the question was one of fitness. Finally the Arehbishop deeided upon a young man who had been his seeretary and his ehaneellor, one with whom he had been so elosely assoeiated that he knew every trait of his eharacter.

But more than priestly power was needed, and by the authority of the Pope, Father Gibbons beeame Bishop Gibbons. This was a part of his mission—to build up the ehureh not only in town but in eountry, to make peaee if possible between Catholic and Protestant, to restore to those of his belief their rights as citizens, of which they had been in part deprived. Outside of Wilmington the entire State of North Carolina contained but an oeeasional group of these believers; for, as I have said, there was not an organized ehurch between the eity and Petersburg, two hundred miles away. Sueh was the dioeese of which Bishop Gibbons was plaeed in eharge—a diocese of the wild, where he might make a journey of fifty miles before reaching a single family of his ehureh, a eountry so sparsely settled that to travel in it often meant following a mere trail impossible for any vehiele, and sleeping at night perhaps without even a tent to shelter one from the elements. The average number of human beings of any belief to the square mile of territory was only twenty, and the railway eonneeted only a half-dozen towns.

Sueh was the field to whieh the young priest was assigned after he had been vested with the episeopal robes. Those who gathered in old St. Thomas's at the first service he eondueted, saw a youth with figure



ST. THOMAS'S CHURCH, WILMINGTON, N. C.

Showing the little annex occupied as a residence by Bishop Gibbons and Father Gross

spare to frailness, but there was in his face the evidence of character and determination. He knew he was in charge of a people who for the time were outside of the town society as much as if they were outcasts. Most of them were in poverty. Some had lost their all in the war. None could be called wealthy. To them the future was one of hopelessness, for such was the crisis in the affairs of the church that the question had arisen if it should not be disbanded and the cities of North Carolina left without a congregation of the Catholic faith.

Then began the greatest struggle yet to be recorded in the life of James Gibbons—a fight to save his church. First, he must have a priest to assist him and to serve the people when he was journeying over field and through valley to reach the few scattered folk in the country. Fortunate was it that a man after his own heart became associated with him—a man willing to make sacrifices and endure hardship and discomfort in his zeal for his life-work. Mark Gross was also young in years when with his friend and Bishop he entered upon his duties in Carolina as rector of St. Thomas's, to remain there, until 1890, continuing the work laid out by his superior. Father Gross entered into his labors with such heartiness that he soon won the esteem of the people, holding a place in their affection second only to that of the Bishop. The two lived together like brothers. Their home is still standing—a little brick "lean-to," scarce two stories high, built in part from their scanty income. They could not afford a better place. The money must go to the maintenance of the church, as the Bishop expressed it. And this hovel was erected behind the church itself. The rear wall of the church formed the back of the house, the building being lighted on only three sides.

CONVENT OF MERCY, WILMINGTON, N. C.
An institution established by Bishop Gibbons over forty years ago

Here these men lived, year after year, bishop and priest eating on a table of rough boards, and sometimes preparing their own food, if they had no funds to get assistance. They slept on cots that stood on floors bare of rug or carpet. The home of many a laborer in the town was much more pretentious and comfortable. But the shelter cost so little to build and maintain that its builders could devote a part of their allowance from

the church authorities to aiding the poorer members of their flock. How many families were thus relieved from time to time by their charity, is known only to themselves. Of Father Gross the story is told that if he had more than one hat, or an extra pair of trousers, he was sure to give them to some needy parishioner. On one occasion he came into the store of a friend with a laced shoe on one foot and a buttoned gaiter on the other. Asked why they were not alike, he replied that he had intended to give a pair to a poor man, but had made a mistake and given one of each kind. His habit of giving away everything he could spare became so well known that several ladies of the church made it their business to call at the Bishop's house frequently to see if the occupants had enough food and clothing. More than once they found it destitute of actual necessaries, and supplied them.

The great benefit of education impressed itself on Gibbons, the young Bishop, as it has continued to impress him in later life. He realized that the children of all classes must be instructed for the good of the state, and if the church was to be preserved. At that time there was no free school in the neighborhood, and many families were too poor to give their little ones even the rudiments of mental training. He knew the value of woman in this necessary work and secured three members of the order of the Sisters of Mercy to establish a convent in Wilmington. They must have a home, and the community was surprised to learn that in some mysterious way the Bishop had obtained enough money to buy one of the notable Southern houses, still known as the Peden Mansion. It cost $20,000—a small fortune for Wilmington,—and the wonder was where the money had come from. Only a small part could have been given by the church folk, but the Bishop had made several trips into the Northern States. He had stood up in the chancel of church and cathedral, and had pictured the plight of Carolina so graphically as to open purse-strings and pocket-books, and to secure over $5000 in the city of Albany alone. Thus the school was established; and it was only one of his purchases for the church. Other property bought for

REAR VIEW OF THE DUDLEY MANSION, WILMINGTON, N. C.
When Bishop Gibbons became Archbishop he was entertained in this house

THE SCHOOL WHERE BISHOP GIBBONS LECTURED AND TAUGHT

Showing the desk and chair which he used, and a painting which he presented to the school

the cause cost thousands more, although not a dollar was asked from the Wilmington people. And with the gifts of his Northern friends was placed a part of the Bishop's personal income—all he could spare from other appropriations for the church.

Within a year after the two men began their labors, the clouds had broken. The broadmindedness and especially the Americanism of the Bishop gradually changed the feeling towards him and his followers. From being distrusted at first, he became esteemed. Through his influence the spirit of the town towards the people was transformed from hostility to goodwill. The example set by their head was emulated by his parishioners, until finally the gap between Catholic and Protestant was closed apparently forever, as no sect is more respected to-day in Wilmington than the adherents of the Church of Rome.

Only a very few remain of the group of the faithful who, Sunday after Sunday, knelt before the altar at St. Thomas's in the sixties. Clearly do they recall the life of the present Cardinal, and the tales they tell depict not only his work among them, but his journeyings here and there in Carolina, when for the time he laid aside his official duties to assume the rôle of a Christian messenger to the country folk. As conditions at St. Thomas's improved, he felt he could give more time to the greater field, and leaving Father Gross in charge he would be absent for a fortnight or more at a time. Where possible he travelled by railway, but so many households of the church were off the few miles of iron highway, that much of his journeying was done on horseback, or muleback, or by wagon. "It was indeed a dilapidated affair," says Mrs. O'Connor, one of his early friends. "It was of the kind known as a 'democrat,' and drawn by two horses. The Bishop sometimes had a young priest with him who drove, or a colored man who assisted. The space they did not occupy was filled with packages of clothing and such things as sugar and flour and medicines. Most of it was for the poorer families with whom they might stop; but they also carried their clerical robes for ceremonies and food for themselves, for many a time did that old wagon stop in the forest where they must eat their noon meal. We often asked the Bishop to give up the old wagon and get another, for it finally became so rickety that I thought it

dangerous. To break down twenty miles from any human habitation is not a trifling matter. But he always replied that he thought the wagon might last a while longer, and when some of the church members offered to buy him another, he answered: 'Friends, you can give me the money, if you will, for the church needs it, but not for any vehicle for my use.'"

THE ALTAR WHICH BISHOP GIBBONS GAVE TO THE CONVENT OF MERCY, SHOWING SOME OF THE STATUARY, ALSO HIS GIFT

Long ago, probably, the old "democrat" was turned into kindling-wood, or stored away to be forgotten; but it had rolled over thousands of miles of Carolina on its mission of mercy. It went into places where its owner risked life and health in succoring families ill of contagious diseases. It entered settlements where every stranger was looked upon as an enemy by the clannish mountaineers. It travelled in the "Feud Belt," where men with loaded guns were accustomed to take by stealth the lives of their enemies. To venture into the rural districts of Carolina was to incur hardship and to risk danger as well. But the man who later wrote "The Ambassador of Christ" could well describe him, for in truth he himself was such, never hesitating to seek out the people of the church, no matter what dangers and hardships might have to be overcome.

Truly St. Thomas's is a picturesque old church. In the other days it stood on a spacious lot which revealed the dignity of its proportions, but a part of this lot has since been sold and the edifice is now squeezed in between the house adjoining and an ugly square wooden structure which serves as a rectory. Constructed of red brick, it is covered with a stucco or plaster of a brown hue which produces an effect of brown stone. The massive walls, the high-hipped roof ornamented by the pinnacles with which the front wall is finished, make the exterior of the church dignified and impressive in spite of the obvious neglect in repairing and maintaining it. The interior walls have been redecorated and the paintings representing the Stations of the Cross are of later date than Bishop Gibbons's time; but the altar in front of which he so often intoned the mass and pronounced the benediction is still intact, as well as the paintings in oil which adorn the front walls on either side of the altar. One of these, representing the Madonna, was a gift from him to the church; while standing below it is a statue of the Virgin—another evidence of his generosity.

As one enters the little old church, he is duly impressed by its association with the past. Not only the American Catholic, but the American of any creed who knows the estimation in which Cardinal Gibbons is held, must feel reverence and admiration as he recalls the scenes that have been enacted here. But not until one sees the ugly, dilapidated annex, nearly hidden behind the church, can he realize how this man existed, what he must have endured in his devotion to his work. The lower floor, on a level with the ground, where it is not even lower, is not as good as the cellar

of some city tenements. The rooms have low ceilings and have always been dimly lighted because of the shrubbery outside. The first floor is divided into two rooms, which when occupied by bishop and priest, formed the kitchen and a supply or storage shed. In the three rooms above they slept and ate their meals. The annex is connected with the church by a stairway, which in the old days led to an apartment in the rear of the church used by the Bishop as a study. Here he received visitors as well as composed many of his sermons.

FIGURE OF A CHILD
One of Bishop Gibbons's gifts to the Convent of Mercy, at Wilmington, N. C.

The Convent of Mercy at Wilmington seems insignificant beside some of the ornate structures occupied by wealthy orders of the Catholic church, but none has a more honorable history than this rambling wooden building, whose character is indicated only by a little cross upon its roof. As the visitor is ushered into the reception room, he may chance to see through an open doorway in the hall a beautiful little chapel. The good Sister Mary Frances may relate how Sunday after Sunday the young Bishop ministered at the altar—another of his gifts to the Sisterhood. And a very artistic altar it is in design. The miniature chapel was made out of the drawing-room of the old planter who built the house. It is only large enough to seat about fifty people, but many of the most eloquent discourses uttered by the founder of this institution have been delivered in it. In the reception room is a large oil painting of the Madonna and Child—another of his loving gifts.

Entering the schoolroom, the visitor sees the little desk which stood on the rostrum in the old days, when the children who had completed their "book learning" received their certificates from the hands of Bishop Gibbons. They have gone into many parts of the country to take their places in the real world, but each can say that he has been sent on his life career with the advice of the man who is now the head of his church in America.

Time spares nothing. For three-fourths of a century has St. Thomas's been the centre of the Roman Catholic worship in Wilmington, but its days are numbered. The present priest has sold the church, and a newer and larger one is to take its place on a site secured elsewhere. If it is not torn down it will be converted into a factory or warehouse, and what should remain a cherished historical structure will be debased from a temple of religion into a nameless pile of brick and mortar. Here, indeed, is an opportunity for the Catholics of America to perpetuate the memory of their head, by uniting to secure it and dedicate it forever as a monument to him. The day might well come when Protestant and Catholic alike would unite in paying homage here not only to a distinguished priest and prelate, but to a statesman and true patriot.

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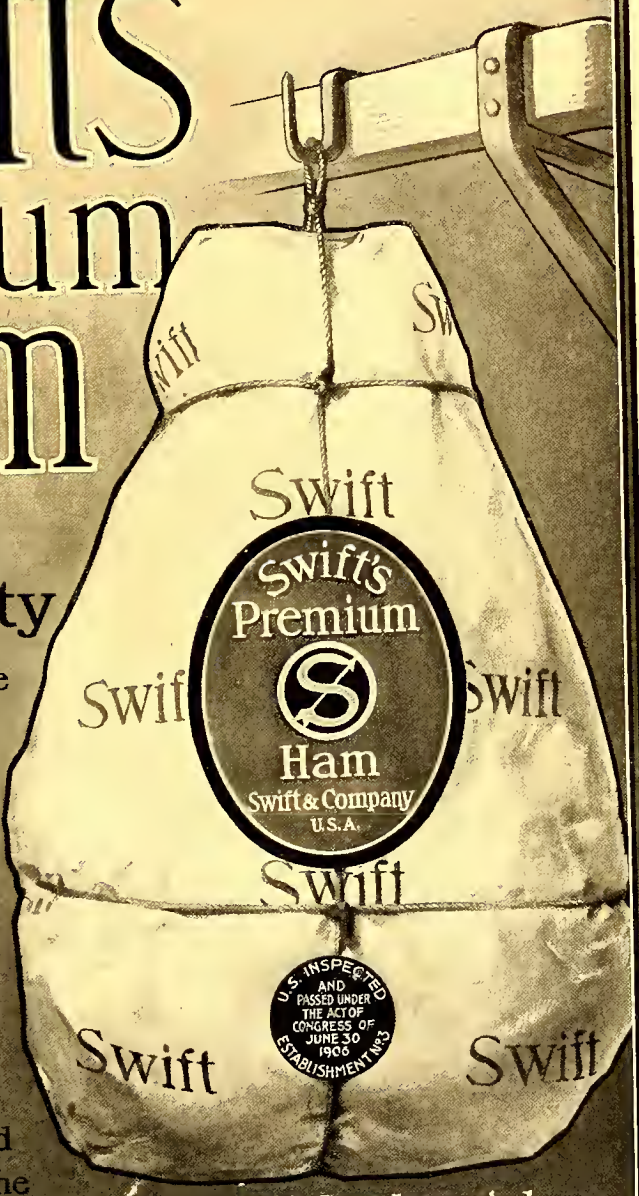
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